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History Period 8

How did the Bay of Pigs invasion do more harm than good?

In the late 1950’s Fidel Castro overthrew the American supported dictator Fulgencio Batista. This uprising created a new communist government in Cuba. It had been the first time in history that there was a communist country in the western hemisphere. This was taken as a severe threat to the United States government. The reaction to the new communist country and arguably the biggest mistake made by the US government in history was known as the Bay of Pigs invasion. It was predominantly an invasion to overthrow Fidel Castro and hopefully get rid of communism in Cuba. The United States surrendered at the Bay of Pigs in a matter of days. Unfortunately, the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs instantly gave Fidel Castro even more support from his allies and was the beginning of what could have been a third world war. The blame was instantly put on the new young president John F. Kennedy which gave him and the country a bad reputation as well as United States allies. The simple thought of trying to stop communism in Cuba negatively impacted the United States during the cold war and for years to come.

One effect of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion was that it heightened the paranoia of Fidel Castro and Cuban citizens. The Cubans were worried that there would be another attack by the United States in the future. After the Bay of Pigs invasion, the USSR put multiple nuclear warheads in Cuba for their protection. The nuclear warheads in Cuba later spawned the Cuban Missile crisis that almost brought us to a third world war. Once the United States found these nuclear warheads, many Americans were outraged that Cuba even had these weapons and instantly started blaming the Soviet Union. What many people seem to forget is that chances are if the United States did not launch the Bay of Pigs invasion there would have never been a Cuban Missile Crisis. But there was one outcome that surprised the United States, that was how quickly the USSR was helping the Cubans. This action made it become evident that if there was another threat of US attack on Cuba, the USSR would likely attack the United States in retaliation along with Cuba. **"**Castro’s insecurity about the future of his rule over Cuba led to the installation of Soviet nuclear missiles there, prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962." This quote shows that the Bay of Pigs not only impacted Cuba, but the Soviet Union as well, making matters worse for the Cold War and for the U.S. It also shows that because of Castro's insecurity toward the U.S, Cuban agression became more and more likely. As for U.S and Soviet relations, the Cold War had went from technological and governmental competition to a possible nuclear war between the two most advanced countries of the time period. This could have been a bigger problem than two countries at conventional war. If the United States and USSR/Cuba went to war, the war would likely include the use of nuclear weapons towards each opponent and the opponent’s allies. This would cause a casualty rate that the world has never seen before. All of these scenarios that could have and were about to happen, snowballed off the Bay of Pigs invasion, which is why I think the United States got lucky with the fact that there was no retaliation from Cuba or the Soviet Union. I also think it was a big mistake made by the United States to invade Cuba because it initiated more problems for the United States. One of these problems was the citizens of Cuba were a lot less supportive of the United States because we invaded their country. As a result from this Castro was backed by his citizens and the United States had an even smaller chance of destroying communism in Cuba.

I also think that the reason for the Soviet Union to put nuclear weapons in Cuba was because of Castro’s paranoia toward the US and the fact that they did not want the United States to stop Communist expansion. It changed our relationship with the USSR from a competition to a possible war.

Another effect of the Bay of Pigs invasion was the fact that it created even more political support for Fidel Castro, which was exactly what the U.S was trying to stop. The United States failing at the Bay of Pigs made the bond between Cuba and the USSR even tighter. That was a big problem for the United States because now there were two communist countries working together on both sides of the globe. The reason the US launched the Bay of Pigs was to stop communism, but the invasion heightened communism in Cuba because of the newfound support of the USSR. The support of the Soviet Union made it evident that the United States was in a no-win situation. If we attack Cuba again, we were virtually guaranteed retaliation from the USSR and Cuba, and if the United States doesn’t attack, the goal of stopping communism in Cuba could be lost.

One negative impact made by the Bay of Pigs is that Fidel Castro used this invasion to his political advantage. Castro emphasized the defeat of the US by implying that Cuba is a stronger nation then the United States. By saying this, he made the Cuban citizens more comfortable with him as a leader and he made them believe that they defeated one of the strongest countries in the world. This leads me to my next point that upon entering Cuba, we were under the assumption that Cuban citizens did not like their new leader. The US was surprised when little to no support was shown by the Cuban people. This meant that the Bay of Pigs invasion was not well planned, showing that the United States underestimated Cuba and their citizens.   If the United States had planned better for the Bay of Pigs invasion, the outcome could have been much different and prevented the many problems with Cuba in the following years.  "In the three years that followed the Cuban Revolution, 250,000 Cubans out of a population of six million left the country. Most of these were from the upper and middle-classes who were financially worse off as a result of Castro's policies."  This quote explains why the Cubans did not help the US during the invasion. All that was left in Cuba were the citizens that supported Castro which were the lower middle class and the lower class because of his new communist policies.  The rest fled the country because they were better off elsewhere and there were too little upper class citizens in Cuba to have a revolt. I think that if the United States did a better job strategizing how they were going to attack Cuba, we would have a better chance of getting rid of Castro and preventing Cuba for being a Communist country. Although I do not believe that the invasion was necessary, I do think that the United States would have created fewer problems for themselves if they did more research on Cuba and how their citizens viewed Castro. The United States should have taken the risks of attacking Cuba into consideration, because the invasion did the exact opposite of what the United States wanted. The Bay of Pigs invasion was something that our country should have easily accomplished, but because of the carelessness of our government and the new president, it almost caused the first nuclear war.

Our mistake with the Bay of Pigs invasion not only impacted our country’s income and risk of citizen casualties, but our reputation as well. Because of our actions toward Cuba, nations throughout the world questioned U.S judgment and dependability. The reason why countries were so fed up with the United States is because the Bay of Pigs invasion took place only 2 decades after a long and bloody WWII. The invasion from the United States almost spawned WWIII. Many countries were still recovering from WWII and now they would have had to deal with the possibility of another war. If the United States started this war it would be likely that nobody would support them just to avoid another one. Also with the United States being one of the two strongest countries in the world at the time, many other countries thought it was unnecessary to go after a country as weak as Cuba, an effect of this being that other countries had lost trust in the United States. This is arguably the worst effect of the Bay of Pigs because it negatively impacts every aspect of running a country. Without the support of foreign countries, it is hard to do trade overseas, retrieve military support and political support. The decision to invade Cuba negatively impacted the US in the long run because we had to try and win back the respect and trust of other countries. “Some critics thought that the United States had not been aggressive enough in its support of the Bay of Pigs invasion and had left an impression of irresolution, while others later questioned U.S. misjudgment of the Cubans’ fighting prowess. The incident was crucial to the development of the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962.” This quote shows that the United States were not prepared to invade the country, it shows that this worried other countries because they now believed that the United States were reacting on impulse rather than weighing their options for war. It’s not that our allies did not like the United States anymore, but that the United States would be too dangerous to support because of the threat of future wars. In my opinion the United States invasion negatively impacted them at the time, and in the future. One positive outcome for the United States attempted Cuban invasion was they realized their mistake before a nuclear war outcome and backed off Cuba. The United States realized another invasion would likely spark a war the United States may not win. This is because it would be likely that there would minimal help from foreign countries and without allies support, the United States would not have stood a chance against the USSR/Cuba wielding nuclear weapons. Even though the United States did things right to get themselves out of a hole, they definitely should have realized that foreign countries would have been upset even if we did reach our goal. Even though The United States could have won, it was still a risk of war from the USSR which automatically puts allies of the United States in danger. I think that the decision to invade Cuba was a very selfish decision on the United States part. They put themselves as well as other countries at risk of getting attacked by either the Soviet Union or Cuba. I think that if they felt the need to invade Cuba, they should have done it by using their own well trained soldiers rather than a poorly trained force of Cuban exiles. The United States made a mistake that should never be made by any country, especially one of the top countries in the world, and that is taking another country lightly. They did just that to Cuba and the United States, a very well structured and high powered country, retreated within three days of the initial invasion.

As you can see, the Bay of Pigs invasion caused a number of problems with the US and could have very well been a lot worse. The carelessness of the United States government was the primary reason why we failed in Cuba and why it took years to rebuild our countries reputation and the problems we created with Cuba and the USSR. The Bay of Pigs was arguably the biggest mistake our country made in this century because it almost sparked the world’s first nuclear war. Although the United States did well to get themselves out of the hole they dug. That in itself could have saved thousands or perhaps millions of US civilian lives. The fact that John F. Kennedy did do so much to prevent war after the invasion proved that he had what it takes to run a country and learn from his mistakes. Many people believe to this day that the Bay of Pigs was an unnecessary and selfish decision by the United States to try and stop communism. A result of this would be that the US created even more problems than they had before which could have brought our country into a fast spike downward.

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